

# A MASTER PLAN for GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY



Prepared by the  
Grand Traverse County Planning Commission  
*In concert with all the planning commissioners  
from around the County*



## 2013

available online at  
[masterplan.grandtraverse.org](http://masterplan.grandtraverse.org)

## THANK YOU PARTICIPANTS

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Courtesy of East Bay Township



*Grand Traverse County  
has always been an  
attractive tourist  
destination, known for its  
pristine natural beauty.*



*The citizens of Grand Traverse County take advantage of a generally healthy economy and a quality of life that offers the amenities of a modern urban environment centered in Traverse City and situated in close proximity to the unspoiled natural resources of the region.*

# About the Plan

## INTRODUCTION TO A NEW APPROACH

[Grand Traverse County](#) and the region have long maintained a tradition of planning balanced between the conservation of natural resources and the recognition of growth and development. While citizens defined their view of future growth and development in the [Grand Vision](#), there remains a gap between those desires and the master plans and zoning ordinances developed by local planning commissions. It will take a collaboration of local planning commissions to advance land use decision-making so that it is more inclusive, more cooperative and more informed. In order to match the principles of the Grand Vision with the goals and objectives of local master plans, a need emerged for a new way of working together so that all planning commissions could accomplish their goals in light of the broader regional discussion. A new master plan for Grand Traverse County was seen as the vehicle to make this happen.

Many conventional elements and the comprehensiveness of a master plan are not in place here. Rather, this plan is based on communication and collaboration amongst ALL of the planning commissions in the county. It identifies values and the strategies to enhance those values and places them at the forefront of land use decisions by continually reviewing trends, maintaining regular discussions and adjusting policy more frequently. In place of the typical list of goals and objectives, the values and strategies in this plan reflect the common principles of all the planning commissions. There is also a newly purposed role for the [Grand Traverse County Planning Commission](#) and its staff to act as conveners in this ongoing process; a process that functions more like a work plan focused first on the highest priorities but has the ability to address other land use issues as they become a priority. This ongoing approach will result in partnerships that build trust, maximize resources, and create strategies with improved results.

*The [Grand Vision](#) is an ambitious, citizen-led vision for the future of land use, transportation, economic development and environmental stewardship across six counties in northwest lower Michigan. More than 15,000 citizens got involved, and voiced their opinions about this vision. Twelve thousand citizens voted for what they wanted for the future for their communities. Of those voters, nearly 75% asked that growth occur in existing developed areas.*



Wuerful Park, home of the Traverse City Beach Bums professional baseball team, is part of Chum's Village in Blair Township.

Grand Traverse County Local Units of Government
Acme Township
Blair Township
East Bay Charter Township
Fife Lake Township
Garfield Charter Township
Grant Township
Green Lake Township
Long Lake Township
Mayfield Township
Paradise Township
Peninsula Township
Union Township
Whitewater Township
Village of Fife Lake
Village of Kingsley
City of Traverse City

# Defining the Issues

In 2011, planning commissioners from all the communities in Grand Traverse County were invited to rank their most important current land use issues. Planning commissioners were then invited to a kickoff meeting and encouraged to become part of a study group on the issue of their interest. Several study groups were formed to identify the common values and strategies to protect those values as a part of this Plan. Understanding that their study group was a small representation of all planning commissioners in the county, study group members worked to develop questions that would be asked of all planning commissions so that their thoughts and concerns could be adequately addressed in the Plan. In 2012, County planning staff visited each local planning commission with the questions from each study group. Staff also met with the county planning commissions of neighboring counties. The study groups developed the values and strategies of this Plan using feedback from all the planning commissions, their own knowledge and experiences, looking at the current trends and reviewing a variety of maps and resources.

## REDEFINING THE ROLE OF COUNTY PLANNING

Overall, the value that came up again and again in every one of the topic discussions was this one:

**We value** communication and collaboration among local governments while understanding that each has a unique context from which it operates.

Although the Plan strategies were formulated on a topic basis, there are several strategies that became common and may be considered additional common values. All of these overarching strategies called for some new definition of the role of and need for the County Planning Commission in local decision making. Follow-up on these strategies would put the County Planning Commission in the roles of:

**Convener:** Every topic group communicated their desire to have the County Planning Commission be the convener for discussions at some level among local units, county and state agencies, local non-profits, and user groups. There was much discussion about unique ways of identifying who should be included in the discussions and how the common issues would be grouped, but the overarching desire was for the County Planning Commission to help bring the groups together for the common good.

**Educator:** Six of the topic groups indicated that local planning commissions should be provided with education about a myriad of topics, and that the County Planning Commission would be the best entity to bring together the expertise needed to provide this education.

**Resource Provider:** Six of the topic groups asked that the County Planning Commission become the provider of lists of model ordinances, best practices, topic experts, and local government agencies or non-profits working in specific topic areas. Planning commissioners are looking for ways to stay informed on land use issues in the county and are looking for guidance, expertise, and information sharing that will provide cost savings for the smaller communities.

The strategies developed for this Plan are the first step in a new relationship between the County Planning Commission and local units, and a new collaborative system of land use planning in Grand Traverse County.

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

Each subject chapter of this plan is comprised of four parts: Current Trends and Analysis; Community Values; Strategies to Enhance Community Values; and Resources.

**Current Trends and Analysis** contains collected data and information about the subject and includes conclusions.

**Community Values** are values or principles that almost always apply to the topic. Values should describe what are the desired outcomes of actions but do not necessarily determine how you achieve them. Values do not have to be equally important in all circumstances and may be prioritized.

**Strategies to Enhance Community Values** are actions taken to strengthen or build upon a community value. Strategies may include:

- **Direction** – Where is the community trying to go to?
- **Scope** – What kinds of activities are involved?
- **Resources** – What is needed to make it happen?
- **Stakeholders** – Who should be involved?

**Resources** are identified plans and agencies available that support the strategies.

A website containing an interactive version of this Plan along with a compilation of County data is available at: [masterplan.grandtraverse.org](http://masterplan.grandtraverse.org)

## CONNECTION WITH LOCAL MASTER PLANS

This Plan recognizes the land use policies in the master plans developed by the local units of government in Grand Traverse County. The following table illustrates how local communities are working collectively to address similar land use related issues. This Plan provides a framework to coordinate these policy directives.

### Summary of Policy Areas in Local Master Plans in Grand Traverse County

Policy Area	ACME	BLAIR	EAST BAY	FIFE LAKE TWP	FIFE LAKE VIL	GARFIELD	GRANT	GREEN LAKE	KINGSLEY	LONG LAKE	MAYFIELD	PARADISE	PENINSULA	TRAVERSE CITY	UNION	WHITWATER
Protection of Natural Resources	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Agricultural and Rural Preservation	X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X
High Density Areas/Town Center/Village Center	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X		X		
Transportation, Public Facilities and Services	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X		X
Interjurisdictional/Regional Cooperation	X		X					X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Proactively Guide Growth/Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X
Planned Corridors	X	X		X						X				X		X
Promote Recreational Opportunities		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Diverse Housing Types		X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X		X		X
Economic Development			X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Historic Preservation					X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X

Source: Compilation of local master plans conducted by Grand Traverse County Planning & Development Department



*Grand Traverse County residents have an appreciation for the Boardman River as it meanders through forests, fields and towns and empties into the Grand Traverse Bay. A river of this quality is a globally rare resource and a priceless community asset. The removal of dams on the Boardman will allow it to return to a more natural state as a free-flowing, cold-water river.*

# Community Profile

## REGIONAL SETTING

Located in the northwest part of the lower peninsula of Michigan along the beautiful Grand Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan, Grand Traverse County provides residents and visitors some of the most beautiful countryside in the Midwest. The citizens of the county take advantage of a generally healthy economy and a quality of life that offers the amenities of a modern urban environment centered in Traverse City and situated in close proximity to the unspoiled natural resources of the region.



Grand Traverse County is northern Michigan's most popular resort destination. Centered on the 45th parallel, the area offers a temperate climate moderated by the Great Lakes. The climate, along with sandy loam soils, is ideal for growing cherries, grapes, and apples. The spectacular natural environment, miles of trails, neighborly communities, miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, many small lakes, and rural areas minutes from town centers offer living at its best.

Local governments include the county seat of Traverse City, thirteen townships and two villages, Kingsley and Fife Lake. Each municipality maintains its own master plan and zoning ordinance. The various jurisdictions within the county along with many other organizations have proven themselves to be willing to cooperate with one another for the overall benefit of the region.



Courtesy of East Bay Township

In the heart of a region known for cherry production, Traverse City is home to the National Cherry Festival.

## LAND USE

### 2010 Existing Land Use/Land Cover in Grand Traverse County

Classification	Acres	Percent
Residential	33,265	10.6%
Institutional	1,589	0.5%
Recreation	3,025	1.0%
Commercial	3,440	1.1%
Industrial	901	0.3%
Transportation/Utilities	1,347	0.4%
Agricultural	46,805	14.9%
Open Land	32,421	10.3%
Forest	133,966	42.6%
Wetlands	39,037	12.4%
Barren	1,568	0.5%
Water	17,336	5.5%
<b>TOTAL ACREAGE</b>	<b>314,700</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: Grand Traverse County Planning & Development Department		

The total area of the county is approximately 314,700 acres or 492 square miles in area.

The predominant land use/land cover is, by far, forest which covers almost 43% of the land area. This is followed by a substantial amount of agricultural land at 14.9%, then wetlands and open land.

Agricultural land is concentrated on Old Mission Peninsula, in the northern halves of Acme and Whitewater Townships, on the fringe of the urban area of Traverse City, and throughout the southern portion of the county.

More intense land uses such as commercial, industrial, institutional and transportation are primarily found in the Traverse City area and to a lesser extent in village areas and in small parcels on major corridors throughout the county.

Commercial land is the largest intensive use category in the county with 3,440 acres.

Residential uses are found predominantly in and around Traverse City including Garfield Township and East Bay Township, village areas of Kingsley, Interlochen and Fife Lake, and around the Long Lake and Spider Lake areas.



About 15% of the land in Grand Traverse County is used for agriculture. Acme Township (foreground) and Peninsula Township (background) have established purchase of development rights (PDR) programs to preserve essential farmland.

## POPULATION

In 2010, Grand Traverse County had a total population of 86,986, an increase of 12% from the 2000 population of 77,655 – making it the third fastest growing county in Michigan during this period. Garfield Township’s population increased 17% from 2000 to 2010 making it the most populated community in the county.

As a tourist destination and an area of many vacation homes, Grand Traverse County experiences an increased population due to its transient population. The annual average transient population is 11% higher than the permanent population counted by the U.S. Census. This translates into an addition of nearly 10,000 to the resident population. The month of July has the highest at 22% higher or almost 20,000.

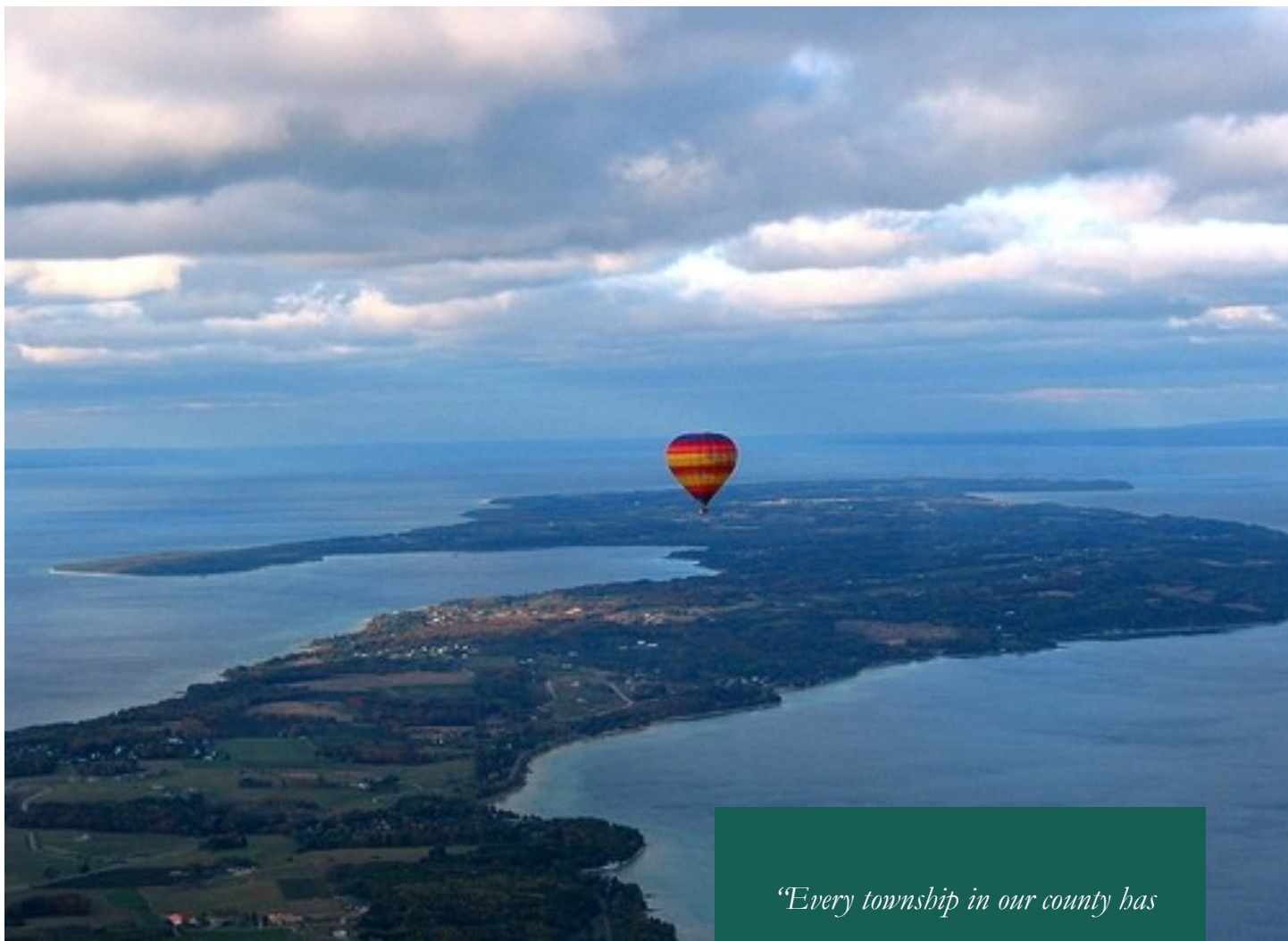
At 41.3 years, the median age of Grand Traverse County is higher than the state and national median ages. Locally, the lowest median age, 32.6, was in Kingsley where 31% of the population is under 18 years. The highest median age, 53.4, was in Peninsula Township where 26% of the population is over 65 years. In 2010, 22% of the population was under 18 years and 15% was 65 years or older. In 2040, 36% of the households are projected to be 65 years or older.



### Population Trends by Municipality

Municipality	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2010 Median Age	2010 Population Under 18 Yrs	2010 Population Over 65 Yrs
Acme Township	2,909	3,447	4,332	4,375	4,929	5,280	46.6	21.8%	18.7%
Blair Township	4,613	5,249	6,448	8,209	11,732	15,985	34.2	27.8%	8.3%
East Bay Charter Township	6,212	8,307	9,919	10,663	12,799	14,599	41.1	23.1%	11.9%
Fife Lake Township	1,056	1,344	1,517	2,791	2,709	2,969	38.4	12.3%	9.2%
Garfield Charter Township	8,747	10,516	13,840	16,256	21,861	27,641	43.0	20.1%	20.4%
Grant Township	676	745	947	1,066	1,415	1,744	44.9	22.7%	14.5%
Green Lake Township	2,997	3,677	5,009	5,784	7,441	9,105	39.5	24.2%	11.9%
Long Lake Township	3,823	5,977	7,648	8,662	11,066	13,375	41.4	25.1%	11.0%
Mayfield Township	806	967	1,271	1,550	2,169	2,852	37.7	27.1%	11.4%
Paradise Township	2,117	2,508	4,191	4,713	4,868	6,619	35.5	28.9%	9.2%
Peninsula Township	3,833	4,340	5,265	5,433	6,416	7,126	53.4	18.8%	25.9%
Union Township	185	255	417	405	498	553	45.9	23.5%	11.9%
Whitewater Township	1,409	1,825	2,467	2,597	3,224	3,718	46.1	21.8%	14.6%
Fife Lake Village	402	394	466	443	488	502	41.1	22.8%	15.6%
Kingsley Village	664	738	1,469	1,480	1,924	2,255	32.6	31.4%	9.5%
Traverse City	15,516	15,116	14,532	14,674	15,519	16,050	40.8	18.2%	16.7%
Grand Traverse County	54,899	64,273	77,655	86,986	106,600	125,244	41.3	22.1%	15.0%

Source: Counts for 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 by U.S. Census Bureau; Projections for 2020 and 2030 by Grand Traverse County Planning & Development Department



*“Every township in our county has a different perspective on how to best protect its natural resources and open spaces. The idea of this master plan is to encourage townships to work together to preserve natural resources and open space.”*

Laura Serocki,  
Peninsula Township  
Planning Commissioner

# Areas of Focus

## PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

The region's landscape is highlighted by Grand Traverse Bay and its 42 miles of shoreline along the north side of the county. At the heart of the county, the Boardman River meanders through our forests, fields, and towns to its outlet in Grand Traverse Bay. Residents view the river as a priceless community asset. Recently, Traverse City and Grand Traverse County decided to remove three of the four existing former hydroelectric dams on the Boardman River to return it to a more natural state as a free-flowing, cold-water river. The removal of the three dams is considered the largest dam removal project in Michigan's history, and the largest wetlands restoration in the Great Lakes Basin.

Grand Traverse County is largely a rural landscape with 81% of the land being undeveloped. Of the undeveloped land, 53% is comprised of forest land in the county. 19% of all land in Grand Traverse County is State forestland. Additionally there are protected lands in conservation easements and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs. These public and protected lands along with water features and wetlands have impacted the pattern of development within the county.

The [2008 Harris Interactive Values Research](#) study conducted for the Grand Vision states the local natural beauty and outdoor recreation figure prominently in the minds of Grand Traverse County residents. The strong positive feelings outweigh the concerns over availability of jobs and a relatively high cost of living in the region.



Courtesy of Long Lake Township

Water quality is often cited by county residents as their number one concern. Bullhead Lake in Long Lake Township.

## Community Values

We value the natural resources, open spaces, and landscape of Grand Traverse County that provide the basis for the health of the local economy and the high quality of life of its residents.

## Strategies to Enhance Community Values

Develop a comprehensive list of organizations in the Grand Traverse area that work in the area of natural resource protection, along with descriptions of the work they do and how their expertise may be used by local Planning Commissions.

Develop a system of monitoring inconsistencies between the Master Land Use Plans and Zoning Ordinances of neighbors so that County Planning could act as a convener to get the conversations started.

Develop incentives for local units and/or local non-profits to develop partnerships to work together on common areas of interest.

Gather together local units so that the connection of the County will bring strength to issues with state agencies.

Provide a reference list of model ordinances used to protect natural resources, open space, and the landscape that include notes on how they are working where they have been adopted.

Notify local units of new issues that are being addressed at the local Planning Commissions that might affect natural resource protection.

Provide educational resources for planning commissioners in the area of natural resource protection.

Team up with the TC Chamber of Commerce to educate the business community about the importance of protecting natural resources.

As the community has recognized the value of natural resources, there has been an effort to protect those resources through the purchase of development rights and establishment of conservation easements. Other approaches include mitigating the negative impacts of development on natural resources through the application of best practices. Stormwater management is one common approach. The Harris survey also found that 80% of county residents strongly to somewhat agree that open space should be preserved even if it means limiting some development opportunities.

Based on a variety of opinion surveys and master plans, water quality is often ranked as a top priority in Grand Traverse County. Most residents depend on groundwater for domestic water supplies while the urbanized area of Traverse City relies on a municipal system which pumps water from the East Arm of Grand Traverse Bay. Lakes and wetland areas are key locations for threatened or endangered species and provide the greatest amount of biodiversity. The community has also recognized the importance of water quality and all natural resources for economic development. The area's natural resources attract tourists to the region and also provide an increased quality of life that helps attract workers needed by area employers.

Natural resources can be important to the economic performance of Grand Traverse County. A 2012 study by the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute, "Drivers of Economic Performance in Michigan: Natural Features, Green Infrastructure and Social/Cultural Amenities", concluded that natural assets have a considerably positive impact on population, income and/or employment levels. These natural assets, often called "green infrastructure," are the physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, wetlands, forest, and open countryside. It includes all environmental resources.





The following Public and Protected Areas map identifies natural resource areas within the County that are important to the community and currently restricted from development. These areas include state-owned forestland, state and local parks and land restricted by conservation easements for the protection of farmland or natural resources.

## Resources

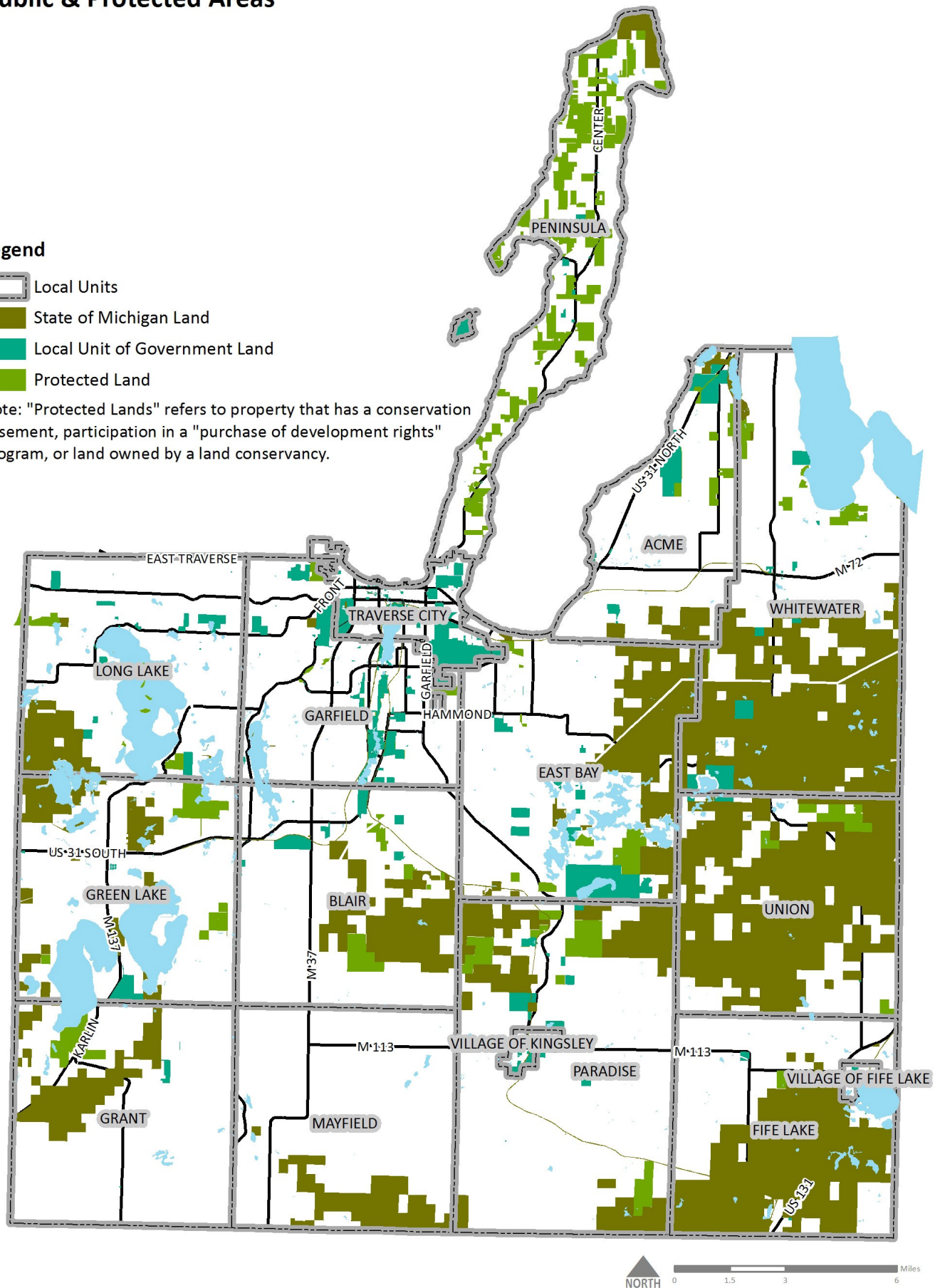
[A Natural Solution: An Introduction to Low Impact Development for Commercial and Residential Applications in the Grand Traverse Region](#)  
[The New Designs for Growth](#)  
[The Grand Vision Natural Resources Network](#)  
[Boardman River Watershed Prosperity Plan](#)  
[Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy](#)  
[Grand Traverse Conservation District](#)

## Public & Protected Areas

### Legend

-  Local Units
-  State of Michigan Land
-  Local Unit of Government Land
-  Protected Land

Note: "Protected Lands" refers to property that has a conservation easement, participation in a "purchase of development rights" program, or land owned by a land conservancy.



## PRESERVE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LAND

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

Courtesy of Peacefall Photography



*“While change is inevitable, progress is not. Progress can also be achieved by lessening the impact of change. This holds true for townships primarily composed of agricultural land. As planners we should first turn to agricultural communities themselves for input on current and future regulations.”*

- Phil Scott, Mayfield Township  
Planning Commissioner

With a combination of rolling topography, ideal soil types, and the micro climate conditions presented by Lake Michigan, Grand Traverse County and the entire region possesses a unique environment ideal for fruit production. 15% of the land in Grand Traverse County, or 46,805 acres, is utilized for agriculture, including 9,007 acres in orchard and vineyards. Based on the varying soil types and topography, agriculture in Grand Traverse County is generally comprised of two general areas of production. The southern part of the county is primarily row crops. The northern part of the County is primarily fruit production. Two township purchase of development rights (PDR) programs (Peninsula and Acme Townships) have been established due to the high value of farmland and the demand for residential land. Over 4,000 acres of farmland are permanently protected land through conservation easements.

The Grand Traverse region is vital to the national cherry industry. Grand Traverse County ranks as the fourth highest county in the nation for growing tart cherries and the fifteenth highest county for growing sweet cherries. Michigan produces 75% of the nation’s total tart cherries. The Traverse City area is also home to an increasing number of vintners who grow grapes and bottle wines, including the scenic Old Mission Peninsula where there are several wineries.

The [2008 Harris Interactive Values Research](#) revealed that 83% of County residents strongly or somewhat agree that agricultural lands should be preserved even if it means limiting some development opportunities.

Commissioned by the Michigan Land Use Institute in 2009, the [“Northwest Michigan’s Farm Factor: Economic Impacts, Challenges and Opportunities”](#) report documents the economic impact of agriculture in the six-county region of Antrim, Benzie, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Wexford. Key findings cited in the report include:

#### Farms in Grand Traverse County

	2002	2007
Number of Farms	522	489
Total Farm Sales	\$7,878,000	\$11,366,000
Average Sales per Farm	\$23,243	\$36,865

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

- Agriculture contributes as much as \$97.7 million annually to the local economy in the form of agricultural products sold. It employs more than 2,000 farm proprietors with net farm earnings of \$6.6 million and more than 3,000 workers with a total payroll of \$12.8 million. If indirect impacts are included, the total annual economic impact may be as high \$138.9 million.
- Agriculture is not the largest economic sector in the region, but it is locally important. Sales of agricultural products are one-half of those for retail trade and over a third the size of sales in the manufacturing sector.
- The region has a climate ideally suited to fruit production and consequently contains 80 percent of the state's sweet cherry orchard acres, 52 percent of tart cherries, 34 percent of plums, and 10 percent of apples.
- The region enjoys an active tourism industry that brings in as many as 1.4 million visitors annually, many of whom travel around the countryside and purchase agricultural products.
- More than 12 percent of farms in the region sold some products directly to consumers in 2007 compared to only 9 percent statewide. More than 6 percent of the region's farms produced and sold value-added commodities in 2007 compared to 4 percent statewide.

Agriculture in the region is expanding in diversity. More recently is the raising of hops.



## Community Values

We value the individual working farms in Grand Traverse County and recognize that the community has the responsibility to allow farmers to farm, to support their products, and to not hinder their viability.

## Strategies to Enhance Community Values

Coordinate meetings between local farmers and local Planning Commissions in small groups at the local level to help identify issues that would be improved with county or local government support.

Convene and facilitate meetings of all planning commissioners with farming within their local units to share ideas and mutual concerns.

Provide a reference list of model ordinances used to protect agriculture that include notes on how they are working where they have been adopted.

Develop a comprehensive list of organizations in the Grand Traverse area that work on farmland issues, along with descriptions of the work they do and how their expertise may be used by local planning commissions and farmers

Provide education to local planning commissioners that will help them look out for farmers' interests when making land use decisions so that they do not hinder the use of land for agriculture.

## Resources

[Michigan State University Extension](#)

[Grand Traverse Conservation District](#)

[Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy](#)

[Northwest Michigan's Farm Factor: Economic Impacts, Challenges, and Opportunities](#)

[Census of Agriculture Grand Traverse County Profile](#)

[Taste the Local Difference](#)

[The Grand Vision Food & Farming Network](#)

## REVISE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

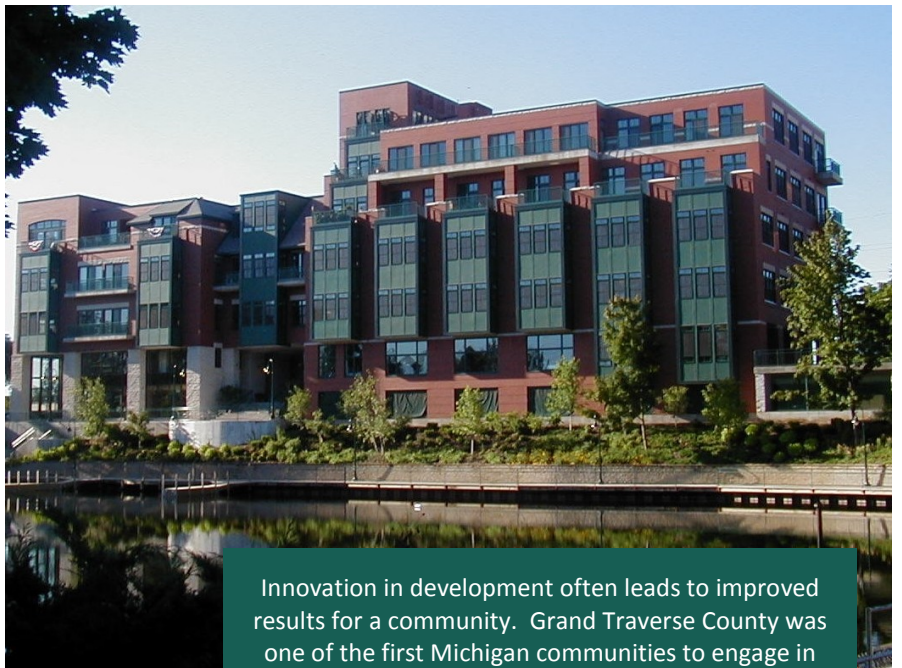
### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

*"If we want developers to play by the rules, let's make sure we have the right set of rules. We need to make sure the regulations are helping us achieve our vision and not move us in the opposite direction."*

- Russ Soyring, Traverse City  
Planning Director

Zoning became established in an era in which the key purpose for land use regulation was to separate residential from commercial and industrial activities. Over the years, the factors affecting land use have changed. Advances in transportation and communication, the migration of people and industry from urban centers to suburban and rural locations, changes in lifestyles and living arrangements, and the changing demands for natural resources present a challenge to traditional zoning techniques. Today, zoning often discourages the very development that communities need and want.

In the early 1990s, residents from around the region recognized the need for development that complements and protects the region's unique beauty, diverse natural resources, and exceptional recreational opportunities. This awareness prompted the creation of the Grand Traverse Bay Region Development Guidebook. This effort evolved into the current [New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook](#) which provides communities with examples of development practices that accommodate growth while maintaining and improving quality of life for residents for years to come.

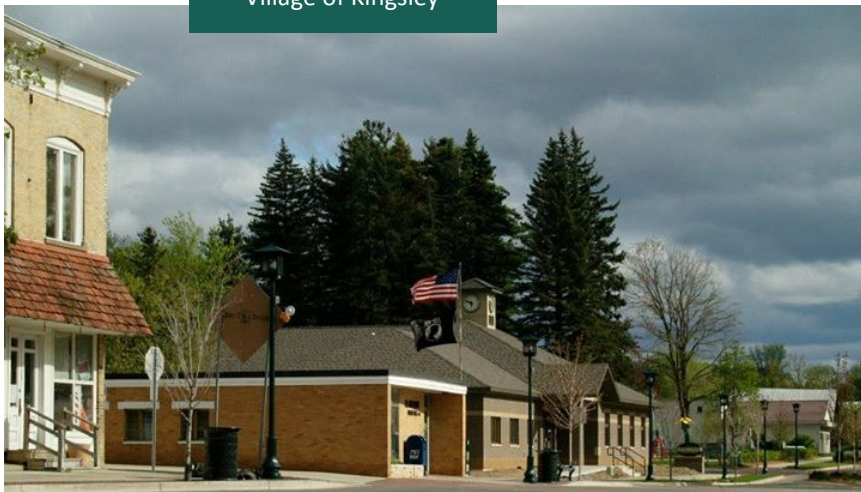


Innovation in development often leads to improved results for a community. Grand Traverse County was one of the first Michigan communities to engage in brownfield redevelopment with the conversion of the old Traverse City Iron Works into River's Edge in the City of Traverse City.

Local master plans also started to address the issues of land use, design and density patterns. Some townships identified new village centers as an alternative to traditional rural and suburban development patterns. Many of the principles in the New Designs for Growth Development Guidebook were expounded in the Grand Vision which reaffirmed interest in developing the villages and towns of this region. However, these policy documents and guidelines only provide direction for development and are not regulatory requirements. Zoning remains the single most important tool for managing development and aiding communities in achieving their vision.

Local communities in Grand Traverse County have responded to development trends with various zoning changes. These include the provision for planned unit developments, clustered development, and incentivized zoning (providing bonuses to developers for certain development considerations). More recently, form-based codes have been recognized. Form-based codes place more emphasis on regulating the form and scale of buildings and their placement along and within public spaces (such as sidewalks, street trees, and street furniture). This approach is well suited for village forms of development. Recognizing the need to be flexible in order to achieve the goals of their master plans, communities are increasingly modifying their development standards. To be successful, this effort also requires flexible development standards by other public agencies that regulate development including the road commission, fire departments, and the health department, among others.

Brownson Avenue in the Village of Kingsley



## Community Values

We value Grand Traverse County's overall unique up-north character, even as many communities seek ways to embrace and brand their own local identities.

We value reinvestment in existing areas of development to best use the community resources currently available.

## Strategies to Enhance Our Values

Develop a county-wide asset/market study that would identify and define tangible and intangible benefits to businesses seeking to locate in Grand Traverse County; including current businesses, schools, cultural aspects, and recreation.

Develop a reference list of what is needed to make certain types of development successful and/or inhibits others from being successful that can be used by zoning administrators, building code administrators, and planning commissioners during development reviews.

Develop a reference list of best practices in energy efficient building and development standards that can be used by Zoning Administrators, building code administrators, and planning commissioners during reviews.

Develop an outline for a county-wide codification system for zoning ordinances to simplify the process of comparing ordinance language throughout the county for developers and economic investors.

Provide a system of review by external agencies (fire department, road commission, soil erosion, etc.) when planning commissions begin their work on major changes to their zoning ordinances.

Convene county-wide discussions of road and fire standards by local planning commissions to identify areas that might be best approached together.

Develop an interactive webpage that provides current information about what Grand Traverse communities are working on.

## Resources

[New Designs for Growth Guidebook](#)  
[Grand Vision Growth & Investment Network](#)  
[Grand Traverse County Traditional Town Center Handbook](#)  
[Redevelopment Ready Communities](#)

## PLAN FOR TOWN CENTERS, VILLAGE CENTERS AND HIGH DENSITY AREAS

*“Arriving at your destination is always a good feeling. Whether traveling home, to a vacation spot or to a family relatives’, all provide a sense of anticipation and accomplishment. Town centers and village centers, when planned properly, can give our communities the same sense of place and provide both economic and social benefits to local residents.”*

- Mark Humitz, local architect  
and Long Lake Township  
Planning Commissioner

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

In 1995, “Focus 20/20 – The Future of Grand Traverse County,” led by the County Planning Commission, envisioned “a set of policies intended to encourage the growth of ‘village centers’ in such places as Kingsley, Fife Lake, Williamsburg, Mapleton and Interlochen. These villages should be encouraged to develop as smaller, self-contained communities with a broad range of economic and social amenities. In addition, green areas formed by open lands, agricultural uses and/or forests should be used to provide buffers that will enable these centers to retain their separate identities.” Since that time, many local master plans in the County have identified building upon an existing village center or creating a new village center.

The [2008 Harris Interactive Values Research](#) study noted that 78% of County residents strongly or somewhat agree that new growth should be directed primarily to existing cities, towns, and villages. In a follow-up [2009 Public Policy Associates, Inc.](#) survey, 80% of residents in the six-county region, including Grand Traverse County, believe “As the region develops in the future, it is important that we create a group of unique villages and cities that are active and charming places with a main street or a downtown.”



The Best Fourth in the North  
in the Village of Fife Lake.

Courtesy of the Village of Fife Lake

It is this kind of community support for growth in existing, developed areas that has led to the success of the Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority which has cleaned-up and redeveloped 17 urban sites. These sites have brought in over \$250 million in private investment and created more than 1,650 jobs in the urban environs in and around Traverse City.

More recently, the trend towards focusing development in existing cities and villages has become a state priority for economic and community development. As promoted by the Governor and state agencies, a new, [state-wide economic development strategy](#) focuses on “placemaking” so that “creating and sustaining great places and using a new, collaborative approach towards economic development built on broad, community-based partnerships makes it possible for the creative entrepreneurial spirit of Michigan’s citizens to emerge. A community without place amenities will have a difficult time attracting and retaining talented workers and entrepreneurs, or being attractive to business.”

**A Case Study:** The **Village of Kingsley** is one of many places for growth and investment.

M-113 is a major east-west corridor through the Village that is ready for infill development. Development here may match the traditional town building form and provide for an array of uses. The following conceptual development contains first floor commercial uses, such as a hardware store and a restaurant, with second floor residential units. Two-story town homes along the street may also match the fabric of the Village. Outdoor activities, such as café seating, can add to the Village’s ambiance.



Before



After

## Community Values

We value concentrated, walkable, community nodes that offer connections among a variety of public, commercial, and private uses.

## Strategies to Enhance Our Values

Prepare a Market Study for the entire county to determine where town centers would be viable and where services are needed.

Bring together local jurisdictions working on town/village centers to discuss the topic from different perspectives and needs.

Provide a clearinghouse with lists of grant or funding options and designers that specialize in town/village centers.

Convene discussions with local units and the Road Commission to talk about road standards, connectivity, and non-motorized uses of roads.

Study the possibilities of a county-wide broadband, particularly in areas where it would be most attractive to businesses. Define and distill information to understand what is needed from a business standpoint and if there is a competitive advantage to broadband being publicly offered.

Conduct informational workshops for local government officials, including planning commissioners about town/village center planning, funding opportunities, design options, walkability, and infrastructure needs.

A review of local master plans finds that town and village centers are planned in various stages. Well defined existing village centers include Interlochen, Kingsley and Fife Lake. Places with plans that are being developed further or need to be refined include Acme, East Bay (Hammond & 3 Mile Roads) and Long Lake (North Long Lake and Strait Roads). There are also hamlets with no formal plans for development including Mapleton, Old Mission, Karlin, Mayfield and Williamsburg. These master plans combined with the Grand Vision principle of “creating a group of unique villages” led to the identification of “growth & investment areas” throughout the county by the Grand Traverse County Planning Commission.

Growth & Investment Areas are based on the existing development pattern, zoning, and community assets like schools and post offices, and infrastructure. In these areas, growth centers on existing development and established contiguous areas where infrastructure and services are available. Land uses in these areas are of a mixed-use village form and provide excellent opportunities for new businesses and housing modeled after the region’s pattern of traditional towns and villages. The following Growth & Investment Areas map identifies priority locations for development and redevelopment as encouraged by local units of government and the County.

## Resources

[Community Placemaking Guidebook](#)

[New Designs for Growth Guidebook](#)

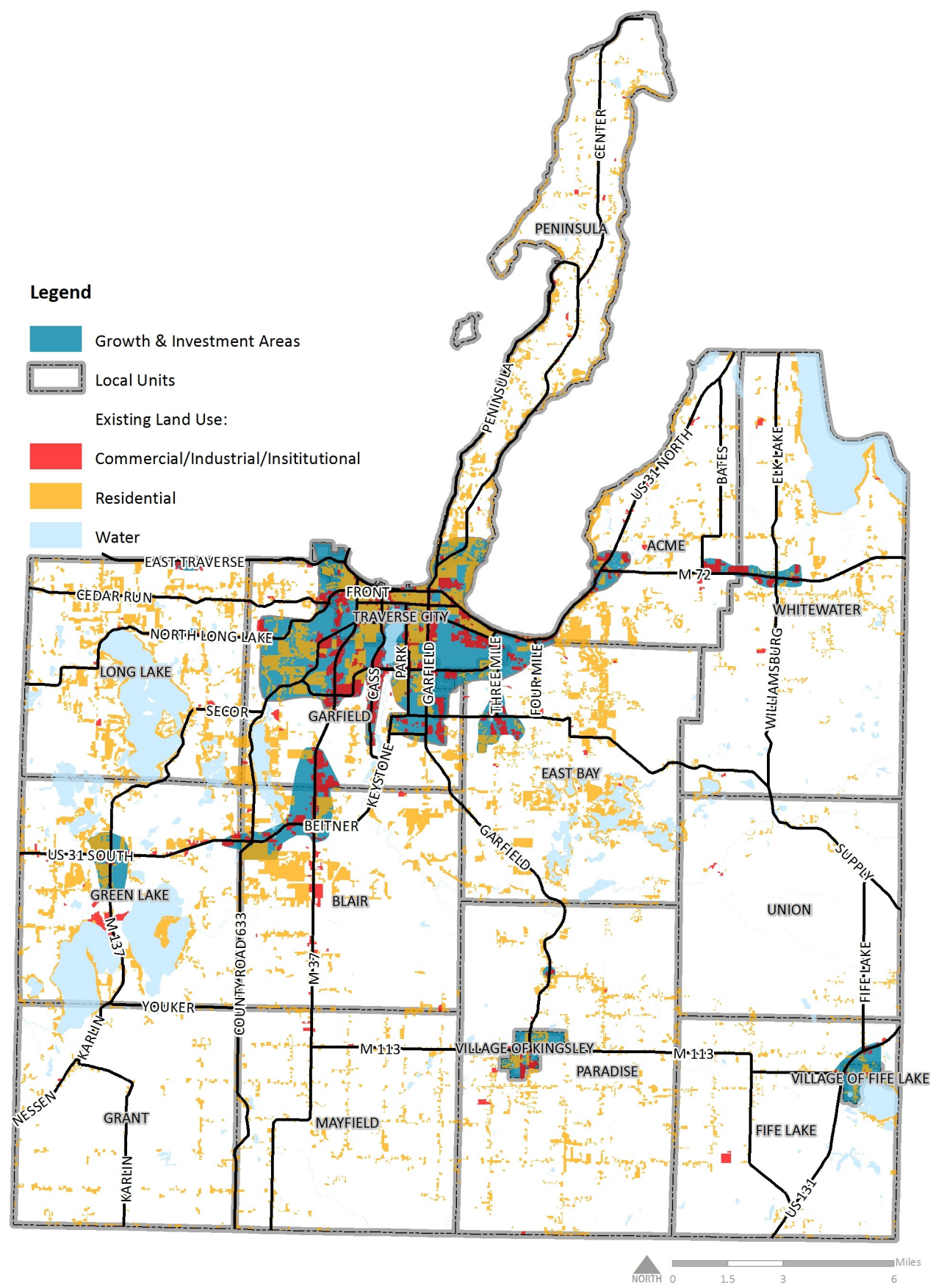
[Grand Vision Growth & Investment Network](#)

[Grand Traverse County Traditional Town Center Handbook](#)



Transformation of the old historic state hospital has resulted into an active community known as the Village at Grand Traverse Commons.

Growth & Investment Areas



## PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CORRIDORS

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

*“Not unlike other communities in Grand Traverse County, in Green Lake Township we have a major intersection that involves two state highways, a major entrance into the county from Benzie County, an interest in non-motorized transportation, and a desire to maintain our village identity. It was important to be involved in the transportation, infrastructure, and corridor committee to make sure that Green Lake could be a part of any future changes.”*

- Sara Kopriva,  
Green Lake  
Township Planning  
Commissioner and  
Long Lake  
Township Zoning  
Administrator

**Transportation Planning:** The Traverse City Transportation and Land Use Study (TC-TALUS) provides coordination of transportation planning and funding for the Traverse City area and was the lead in the development of the Grand Vision which contains a strong transportation emphasis. Highlights of the transportation system in Grand Traverse County includes the following:

**Transit:** Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) provides transit services for Grand Traverse and Leelanau Counties and recently launched a new service model. The new system offers expanded hours and more frequent stops while eliminating 55,000 miles from its routes annually. A system of loops and links provide increased options to riders and represents another step in a rapid transformation of BATA to meet community needs.

**Non-motorized Transportation:** The TART Trails system currently consists of eight multi-use trails in Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties as well as a cross-town bike route totaling nearly 60 miles. TART Trails, Inc formed in 1998 to provide transportation and recreation opportunities as well as preserving open space corridors through a network of trails. TART Trails is a non-profit organization that builds trails, advocates for active living and outdoor recreation. Its system is widely used and supported by the community.

**Airport:** The Cherry Capital Airport is owned jointly by Grand Traverse County and Leelanau County and serves much of northern Michigan and provides an essential gateway for the community. Since opening its new terminal in 2004, the Airport has continued to grow with various carriers adding seasonal service and destinations. In 2012, the Airport had 182,616 passenger boardings (enplanements) making it the fifth busiest airport in Michigan.

**Corridors:** Recognizing the focus of local master plans and the Grand Vision on new development in areas that have already experienced growth, transportation planning along road corridors will place an emphasis on moving travelers from one destination point to the other with minimal conflict and delay. The Grand Vision solidified this emphasis by identifying Corridors of Significance in the Traverse City urban area. This emphasis includes preserving capacity on the existing road system, prioritizing new investment in roads within the existing grid network, and creating a multi-modal system, including non-motorized, that is a viable transportation option for all users in every season. These actions will be achieved through access management plans, intersection safety improvements, curve safety improvements, road diet, capacity improvements and signal optimization.

Focus on new and emerging corridors along with older urbanized corridors is also a priority. The City of Traverse City has studied five streets (Garfield Avenue, Eighth Street, Fourteenth Street, East Front Street and West Front Street) to develop a corridor redevelopment plan that focuses on increasing economic vitality, increasing housing choices and improving public infrastructure.

**Complete Streets:** As shown in the [2008 Harris Interactive Values Research](#) study conducted for the Grand Vision, 91% of Grand Traverse County residents strongly or somewhat agree that it should be convenient to walk or bike in new developing areas. Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, bicycle to work and allow buses to run on time. Recent Complete Streets policies and endorsements by communities represent the priority to create transportation facilities that accommodate all users.

**Water & Wastewater:** Public water systems serve the City of Traverse City and portions of East Bay, Garfield, Peninsula and Elmwood Townships. Kingsley and Blair Township also maintain public water systems. Water to serve these systems is drawn from both surface and ground water sources. The Traverse City system utilizes water from the East Arm of Grand Traverse Bay. Other systems, including private systems, utilize groundwater supplies. Public wastewater plants are found in Traverse City, Fife Lake and Kingsley. The wastewater treatment plant in Traverse City services the City, East Bay, Garfield, Peninsula and Acme Townships and Elmwood Township in Leelanau County. A seepage treatment facility is operated by the Grand Traverse County Board of Public Works.

**Electric, Heating & Cooling:** Increased awareness of electricity consumption and energy for heating and cooling buildings has led to efforts to reduce energy demand, improve energy efficiency and transition to renewable sources of energy. Wind energy systems have been increasingly installed across the state of Michigan; however few, if any, commercial systems have been installed in Grand Traverse County.

**Broadband:** Though high-speed Internet is now available for most residents, some pockets in southern Grand Traverse County remain including near Kingsley, Interlochen and around the Spider Lakes area. Given the county's mainly rural setting, broadband service is essential for e-commerce, education, tourism and entertainment services.

## Community Values

We see great value in a coordinated effort of all jurisdictions throughout Grand Traverse County to solve transportation and infrastructure issues.

## Strategies to Enhance Our Values

Coordinate discussions/reviews with transportation and infrastructure providers at the beginning of any jurisdiction's master plan process that will help all planning commissioners understand the plans for and availability of utilities, roads, and public transportation and will help providers understand the key land-use issues that are facing local units.

Convene discussions among local jurisdictions along key corridors to help coordinate transportation and land use efforts.

Coordinate discussions about overall plans for infrastructure growth plans, such as sewer/septic, options for electricity generation, internet services, and others. This would include local unit representatives so that identification of opposing plans/goals can be identified and worked through.

Work with those coordinating trail systems to identify missing trail links to help line up an interconnected system



Courtesy of City of Traverse City

## Resources

[TC-TALUS](#)

[Citizens' Guide to Transportation Planning](#)  
[Regional Non-Motorized Comprehensive Strategy](#)

[Planning for Pathways](#)

[The Grand Vision Transportation Reports](#)  
[Grand Vision Transportation Network](#)

## ADDRESS HOUSING NEEDS

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

*“Housing represents one of our most basic needs. Housing that is unaffordable, deteriorating, or inadequate in terms of size or type has enormous consequences for the health, safety, and welfare of individual households and the community as a whole.”*

- Kim Pontius,  
Traverse Area  
Association of  
Realtors



Over the years, Grand Traverse County has recognized the challenge of affordable housing facing residents. Programmatic changes started in 2006 with Grand Traverse County establishing a Land Bank Authority to manage tax foreclosed properties. A primary goal of the Land Bank Authority is to address affordable housing. In 2010, Grand Traverse County established an affordable housing trust fund to provide a local, sustainable funding source for affordable housing projects. Finally, beginning in 2012, Grand Traverse County aligned its housing programs with its Planning and Development Department to maximize all funding resources with its tools to address the issue. Recognizing the realignment of County resources, Grand Traverse County, with the assistance of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, developed the 2012 Housing Inventory and 2013 Housing Strategy.

The Housing Inventory also focused on the affordability of housing in Grand Traverse County. A housing unit is considered affordable to a household if housing costs total 30% or less of that household's income—with “costs” referring either to rent, or, for ownership units, mortgage interest and principal, taxes, and insurance. When households pay more than 30% of their income for housing, they are considered cost over-burdened; a financial strain that creates a higher risk of foreclosure or homelessness.

#### 2012 HOUSING INVENTORY KEY FINDINGS

The majority of the County's housing stock consists of single-family, owner occupied housing. In some townships, this housing type accounts for 90% or more of the stock.

Most rental and multi-family housing is concentrated in Garfield Township and the City of Traverse City.

High numbers of single-person rental households contrast with low numbers of one-bedroom or efficiency rentals.

Mobile homes are concentrated in Garfield, Blair, and Paradise Townships, all of which are home to mobile/manufactured home parks. Mobile homes are an important affordable housing option for low-income households, particularly in rural areas with limited options for rentals, making up about 18% of the County's affordable ownership housing. However, many of these homes are aging and/or of poor construction quality, leading to higher rates of deterioration.

Like the nation, the County's population is aging, creating different housing needs—particularly accessibility. Available data suggests that few of the County's existing homeownership or rental units include barrier-free or accessibility features.

The typical household in Grand Traverse County spends 57% of their income on housing and transportation costs combined. In many parts of the County, particularly those in rural areas that are home to the County's more “affordable” housing, combined housing and transportation costs total well over 60% of a typical household budget.

While nearly 40% of owner-occupied households are considered low income, only 26% of owner-occupied housing is of an “affordable” value to low-income households. Over half (57%) of that housing is located in East Bay, Blair, and Green Lake Townships. To afford the monthly costs of owning a home in Grand Traverse County, a household would need to earn about \$52,650 per year. To afford a median priced rental, a household would need to earn about \$31,560 per year.

The adequacy of housing is usually measured by the physical condition of the home, but may also include factors such as overcrowding or accessibility for the disabled and elderly. In this analysis, adequacy is addressed in the context of housing condition.

About 800 homes in Grand Traverse County are classified as being in poor condition. This classification indicates that the home is approaching the end of its usable life, pointing to a possible need for significant repairs or replacement. Another 3,196 are classified as being in “fair” condition, which signals marked deterioration. Mobile homes make up 80% of housing that’s classified as being in “poor” condition.



Integrated within the Village at Grand Traverse Commons, the 630 Lofts provide housing at reduced rents to qualified individuals who often represent the community's workforce.

## Community Values

We value a diverse mix of regional housing options that fit in with the unique character of the neighborhoods, villages, and cities as well as rural housing, which are all important to the area.

## Strategies to Enhance Community Values

Support and encourage new housing development that is affordable, well-designed, and compatible with the region’s unique character

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices to lower utility and transportation costs, decrease emissions and energy usage, and promote public health.

Target housing activities toward existing communities to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and preserve and protect the region’s agriculture and natural resources.

Encourage affordable housing that is accessible to the growing numbers of seniors and persons with disabilities.

Develop greater financial and programmatic capacities to support and enhance housing efforts of existing nonprofits.

Coordinate planning and zoning policies that encourage greater housing choices across government boundaries.

Raise awareness and support of affordable housing issues among the

## Resources

[Grand Traverse County 2012 Housing Inventory](#)

[Grand Traverse County 2013 Housing Strategy](#)

## GROW THE LOCAL ECONOMY

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

*“When I look at Grand Traverse County as a whole I see the best well-kept secret around. It is a great place to live, work and play. I want to see it stay that way and the only way that will happen is if we have jobs and affordable housing that will enable people to provide their families with the quality of life that they desire.”*

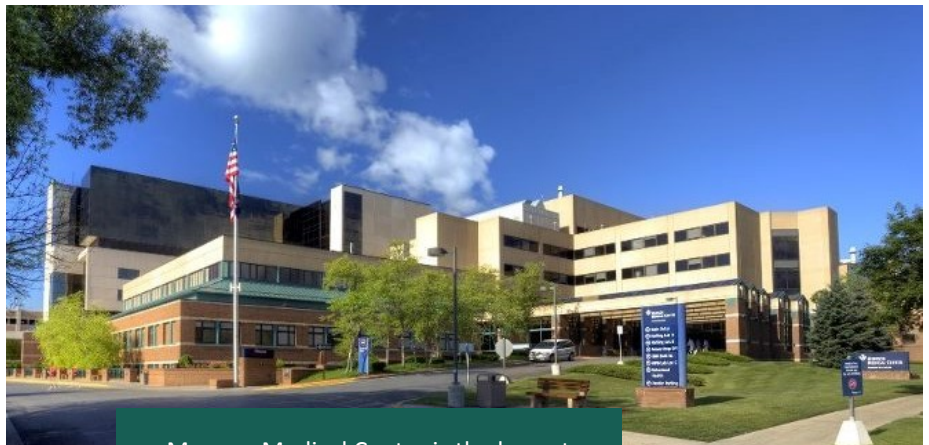
-Tracey Bartlett, East Bay Township  
Treasurer and Planning Commissioner

While Grand Traverse County and the entire state of Michigan are experiencing a severe downturn in the economy, it appears through unemployment figures that the worst is over. Unemployment rates peaked in 2009; however, the labor force has shrunk, which is a significant reason why the rates have dropped.

Grand Traverse County had a total of 49,224 persons in its workforce at the end of 2006 and a relatively low unemployment rate of 5.9%. In 2009, the county's unemployment rose to 11.8 with the labor force shrinking somewhat to 48,330 persons. However, at the end of 2012, the county's unemployment rate decreased 7.6% while the labor force declined to 45,712 persons.

The largest private and/or institutional employers in the county include Munson Medical Center, Traverse City Area Public Schools, Grand Traverse Resort & Casino, Northwestern Michigan College, Traverse Bay Intermediate School District, Grand Traverse County Government, Sara Lee Bakery, Grand Traverse Pavilions, Hagerty Insurance, and Interlochen Center for the Arts.

A total of 3,440 acres, about 1.1% of Grand Traverse County's land area, are currently used for retail and commercial activities. The major retail locations in the County are the urban area of Traverse City (City of Traverse City, Garfield Township and East Bay Township) along with Acme, Chum's Corner, Fife Lake, Grawn, Interlochen, Kingsley, and Williamsburg. A total of 901 acres, about 0.3% of Grand Traverse County's land area, are currently used for industrial activities. The major industrial locations in the County include several business parks and the Cass Road, Hammond Road, M-37, and US-31 corridors.



Munson Medical Center is the largest employer in Grand Traverse County and all of northern Michigan with over 3,000 employees.

Grand Traverse County comprises approximately 65% of the total regional employment. Health care and social assistance is the largest employment industry in the county. In its outlook through 2040, the University of Michigan's [Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy](#) states Grand Traverse County is located in one of five fastest-growing areas in the state with employment growth projected to be 150% higher than the state average. The report notes, "The most rapid job growth will occur in the northwest corner of the Lower Peninsula, suburban Grand Rapids, and the Ann Arbor area."

A number of organizations are active in economic development issues including the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce, Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation, Grand Traverse County and many local units of government. Most recently, the urban core communities of Grand Traverse County (City, Garfield Charter Township, East Bay Charter Township and Blair Township) united in economic development with the creation of the Next Michigan Development Corporation. Next Michigan is a series of incentives for businesses that ship their goods out of the region by both road and air. More importantly, this effort provides opportunity for a more collaborative approach from the public sector in private-public partnerships and related projects.



Value-added agriculture is a significant part of economic development in Grand Traverse County.

## Community Values

We value and want to attract business that is community oriented and able to provide living wage jobs so that current residents are able to maintain their current standard of living and young, educated, career-oriented people will want to live and work in Grand Traverse County.

We value the unique assets in every Grand Traverse County community and understand that we all have a stake in attracting business, but that economic development should be encouraged only in those communities that are interested in creating a place for business to exist and grow.

## Strategies to Enhance Our Values

A community-by-community inventory list of assets that would be tangible and intangible benefits to businesses seeking to locate in Grand Traverse County; including current businesses, schools, cultural aspects, and recreation.

An inventory of properties in the county currently zoned or planned for commercial development; including specific zoning limitations, and in-place infrastructure.

Work with the Traverse Area Chamber of Commerce to develop a list of businesses in the county that are currently thriving and providing livable wages and the reasons why they think they are successful so that interested communities are able to work toward providing those important business needs.

Conduct informational workshops for local government officials, including planning commissioners, about the definition of economic development, why it is important to all communities, and the repercussions of zoning decisions on their ability to attract the types of businesses they would like.

Work with Northwestern Michigan College and universities involved in the University Center to provide training to the types of workers needed by local businesses and those that the communities are trying to attract.

Conduct an informational workshop for local government officials, including planning commissioners that would use a local business case study to illustrate the steps that were taken and the obstacles that were overcome to make the process of locating in Grand Traverse County successful.

Work with the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce to reach out to all Grand Traverse County communities to help them understand their role in the larger community and the importance of each role to economic development; including infrastructure, zoning restrictions, and community assets.

## Resources

2012 Economic Outlook for the 5-County Region of Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau Counties

Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce

Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation

Grand Traverse County Land Bank Authority

Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority

Grand Traverse County Economic Development Corporation

Grand Traverse Region Next Michigan Development Corporation

Michigan Economic Development Corporation

## COLLABORATE AND PLAN TOGETHER

### CURRENT TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

In Michigan, land development regulation is generally a local responsibility. This means that individuals can have a great influence on the policies and regulations that affect their community. Land use planning and zoning is a priority in Grand Traverse County as every local unit of government maintains a planning commission and has prepared a master plan and zoning ordinance. The [2008 Harris Interactive Values Research](#) study indicated that 77% of County residents believe it is extremely important or very important that the County have a vision or long range plan for growth. When asked how they would rate the performance of the County when it comes to planning and preparing for the future of the region, 60% of Grand Traverse County residents replied “fair” or “poor.”

With 16 local units of government and 119 planning commissioners in Grand Traverse County, there is opportunity for collaboration and planning together. In addition, each of the surrounding counties has a planning commission along with many planning commissions for the local units of government adjacent to Grand Traverse County. Many planning commissions in the County have opened lines of communication with their neighboring planning commissions to coordinate on land use issues of common concern. To date, there have been some formal collaborative efforts, most notably the joint planning commission created for the Grand Traverse Commons by the City of Traverse City and Garfield Township.

Beyond county borders, Grand Traverse County is the most populated county in the region. The urbanized area of Traverse City functions as a regional hub for jobs and services. Coordination with adjacent counties is important to address many issues that go beyond county boundaries including transportation, protection of natural resources, etc.

In the report, “[Breaking Down Barriers to Cooperative Land Use Planning](#)” by the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), barriers to multijurisdictional planning and land use decision making can be gradually lowered or removed with the help of:

- Interjurisdictional diplomacy that respects the unique histories and needs of townships, villages and cities, recognizes both common

*“Collaborative planning can be a learning process wherein participants share ideas and challenge their opinions to learn from each other and thereby create shared understandings which hopefully will enable solutions to what often are contentious and complex planning issues.”*

- Bob Carstens, Acme Township and  
Grand Traverse County  
Planning Commissioner



Planning together  
for pathways in  
the Village of Kingsley  
and Paradise Township.

interests and fundamental differences between cooperating municipalities, builds trust and works toward shared city-township goals.

- Professional planning support that offers a sophisticated understanding of municipal governments, state statutes and local powers, and helps communities problem-solve.
- Technical assistance that supports local planning and decision making such as geographic data development, integration, and analysis (e.g., using geographic information systems) as well as community-wide information sharing and public participation processes (e.g., citizen task teams, survey research, and community-active Web sites).
- Training and educational workshops supported by a growing library of successful model projects providing a clear record of success and lessons learned from an assortment of multijurisdictional projects.

Grand Traverse County shares borders with Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford Counties which have either all county or a mixture of county and local zoning. Other than the City of Cadillac in Wexford County, these areas are primarily rural where residents often travel to the Traverse City area for work, air transportation, shopping, college, medical care, and recreation. Residents of Grand Traverse County are more apt to travel through these adjacent counties or explore recreational opportunities. Although the discussion has begun through the process of this plan, there is currently little collaboration among the counties on land use issues.

## REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

Recognizing the importance of reaching out beyond its boundaries and relating to the larger region, the Grand Traverse County Planning Commission engaged the county planning commissions of the surrounding counties, including Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Leelanau and Wexford by visiting with each county planning commission and asking a series of questions:

- What are some of the best practices in land use planning in your county?
- What do you see as areas of cooperation to our mutual benefit?
- What are the challenges for this region?

Transportation (road, air and rail), economic development, water resources and ecological issues, post K-12 education, and medical services were all identified by multiple counties as areas of possible collaboration. In addition, many planning commissioners could see value in combining resources in their own education as new land-use issues come to light.

It was also clear from these discussions that people from these areas of northern Michigan value that “up-north feel” and beauty with its abundant natural resources. They all want their children to be able to find affordable housing and jobs in the region without negatively impacting the environment. They want to be able to retire here and have the ability to enjoy the recreational opportunities that abound in the area. These were clear common threads through all of the discussions, both in and out of Grand Traverse County and are prime for collaboration.

## Community Values

We value the creation of opportunities for local governmental units, the grass-roots decision makers, to communicate and collaborate with each other, government agencies, local non-profits, and community members on issues of interest or those that will impact beyond their own borders.

## Strategies to Enhance Our Values

Invite local Planning Commissions of different communities to meet together to talk about identified common interests.

Develop a list of Planning and/or subject matter experts that could help communities with specific topics of concern with little or no cost to the community.

Develop a list of collaboration facilitators to help communities design processes for involving members of the public in decision-making with little or no cost to the community.

Provide for a system of communications between the county and local planning commissions through county staff discussions or local meetings on a planned, regular basis.

Provide an on-line clearing house of best practices on a variety of planning issues easily available to local units.

Provide educational opportunities for planning commissioners to help them understand their roles in the greater Grand Traverse community and to encourage them to have more discussions about issues of interest to their communities.

Introduce placemaking to communities as a way for them to work their communities. They don’t have to figure everything out, they can let the community have a real role in doing it.

Provide workshops for planning commissions that allow them to learn and then brainstorm about ways to include

## Resources

[Kingsley-Paradise Community Pathway Plan](#)

[Fife Lake Community Recreation Plan](#)  
[Grand Traverse Commons Joint Planning Commission Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance](#)

[Grand Vision – Grand Traverse County Perspective](#)



*Planning helps communities find  
the right balance between  
development and protecting the  
natural environment.*

# Action Plan

The County Planning Commission reviewed the overall Values and Strategies to Enhance those Values in order to identify common threads and to discern priorities and most easily achievable results. Each strategy has an associated action in the Action Plan.

After further review of the actions, the County Planning Commission narrowed the actions into succinct, measurable actions and formed the Action Plan for the Master Plan. The Action Plan is laid out in a matrix divided into three categories: Convene Participants, Deliver Education and Provide Resources. Each category lists the following:

- **Outcomes** are the results gained by the community from implementation of the plan.
- **Actions** are precise, measurable activities that support the completion of a goal.
- **Partners** are the people that need to collaborate together to make an action happen.
- **Required Resources** are, where applicable, the assets, whether funding or services, needed to implement the action.

Actions are evaluated and prioritized on an annual basis by the County Planning Commission. Priority is determined by the complexity of the action, the demand for action and the needed partners and resources.

Green Lake and Duck Lake in  
Green Lake Township



## A. CONVENE PARTICIPANTS

OUTCOME	ACTION	PARTNERS	REQUIRED RESOURCES
<b>A1: ANNUAL PLANNING SUMMIT OF LOCAL PLANNING COMMISSIONERS</b>	Convene and facilitate an annual summit of all planning commissioners to receive an update on current planning trends, identify community priorities and build a collaborative strategy on issues of common interest.	Local and county planning commissioners, planners and zoning administrators	Internet-based outreach program
<b>A2: TOWN &amp; VILLAGE CENTERS CONNECTED BY MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS</b>	Assist local jurisdictions planning for town and village centers and the corridors that connect them, including coordination of transportation and land use, economic development and housing.	Local and county planning commissioners, elected officials, planners and zoning administrators	Professional technical assistance, implementation funding
<b>A3: PROTECTED FARMLAND &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	Convene a team of local government and non-profit organizations engaged in land conservation efforts to assist individual communities with farmland protection and natural resource conservation strategies.	Local and county planning commissioners, planners, zoning administrators and conservation	Internet-based outreach program, professional technical assistance
<b>A4: COORDINATED DELIVERY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SERVICES</b>	Facilitate strategic alignment of the County Planning Commission, Economic Development Corporation, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Grand Traverse Next Michigan Development Corporation, Farmland Board, Land Bank Authority and Housing Initiatives.	Representatives and staff from all boards	
<b>A5: UPDATED DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS THAT MEET TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE GOALS</b>	Convene county-wide discussions of road and fire standards by local Planning Commissions to identify areas that might be best approached together, including road standards, connectivity and non-motorized uses of roads.	Local and county planning commissioners, elected officials, planners, zoning administrators, engineers, fire officials and developers	Facilitator, professional technical assistance

## B. DELIVER EDUCATION

OUTCOME	ACTION	PARTNERS	REQUIRED RESOURCES
<b>B1: ANNUAL WORKSHOPS FOR LOCAL PLANNING COMMISSIONERS</b>	Provide annual workshops on key issues for local planning commissioners on the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural resource protection</li> <li>• Planning for town &amp; village centers</li> <li>• Role of the planning commissioner in the greater Grand Traverse community</li> <li>• Placemaking</li> <li>• Consensus decision making</li> <li>• Farmland protection</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Streamlining the development review process</li> </ul>	Local and county planning commissioners, elected officials, planners, zoning administrators, conservation representatives, developers, facilitators	Annual funding, professional technical assistance
<b>B2: WORKSHOPS FOR LOCAL ZONING ADMINISTRATORS</b>	Provide technical training to zoning administrators on key issues, including developing “plain” language in zoning ordinances that is easily understood by the community.	Local zoning administrators	Funding, professional technical assistance
<b>B3: COMMUNITY PLANNING FORUMS</b>	Provide forums for residents to learn about planning and land use issues facing the community. Also, team up with the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce to inform the business community about the value of planning.	Local officials, residents, business owners, non-profit organizations	Professional technical assistance

## C. PROVIDE RESOURCES

OUTCOME	ACTION	PARTNERS	REQUIRED RESOURCES
<b>C1: MARKET STUDY FOR EACH GROWTH &amp; INVESTMENT AREA</b>	Develop market studies for growth & investment areas, including identifying business, institutional, cultural and recreational assets.	Local and county planning commissioners, elected officials, planners and zoning administrators	Professional technical assistance
<b>C2: ASSET INVENTORY FOR EACH COMMUNITY</b>	Develop community-by-community lists of assets that provide tangible and intangible benefits to businesses, including current businesses, infrastructure, data and marketing information, development processes and available properties for development.	Local and county planning commissioners, planners and zoning administrators	
<b>C3: PLANNING RESOURCE DIRECTORY</b>	Develop an online, comprehensive planning resource directory, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area organizations engaged in natural resource conservation and farmland protection.</li> <li>• Funding resources, planners and designers specializing in town and village centers.</li> <li>• Experts that assist communities with specific topics of concern.</li> <li>• Case studies of successful development.</li> <li>• Facilitators to assist communities in designing processes for involving the public in decision-making.</li> <li>• Best planning practices on a variety of topics.</li> </ul>	Local and county planning commissioners, planners and zoning administrators	Professional technical assistance, website development
<b>C4: MONITORING SYSTEM FOR PLAN AND ORDINANCE UPDATES</b>	Develop a system of monitoring inconsistencies between the master plans and zoning ordinances of neighbors so that County Planning could act as a convener to get the conversations started.	Local planners and zoning administrators	Website development
<b>C5: PRE-PLANNING MEETINGS</b>	At the onset of a new master plan or zoning ordinance process, provide a review meeting of external agencies (fire department, road commission, soil erosion, etc.) for local planning commissions to discuss and coordinate key land use issues and developments.	Local planning commissioners, planners, zoning administrators, agency representatives	
<b>C6: WEB-BASED FORUM FOR PLANNING COMMISSIONERS</b>	Provide an interactive forum for local and county planning commissioners to learn about land use topics, educational workshops, key planning efforts and important meetings.	Local and county planning commissioners, planners, zoning administrators and elected officials	Professional technical assistance
<b>C7: MODEL CODES AND ORDINANCES</b>	Provide model codes and ordinances on various land use and development issues, including their level of success and where the communities where they have been adopted.	Local zoning administrators	Professional technical assistance
<b>C8: LOCAL UNIT AND NON-PROFIT PARTNERSHIPS</b>	Develop incentives for local units and/or local non-profits to develop partnerships to work together on common areas of interest.	Local and county planning commissioners, planners, zoning administrators, elected officials and non-profit representatives	
<b>C9: COUNTY-WIDE ZONING CODIFICATION</b>	Develop a county-wide codification system for zoning ordinances to help in comparing ordinance language throughout the county.	Local zoning administrators and planners	Professional technical assistance
<b>C10: COUNTY-WIDE ACCESS TO BROADBAND</b>	Assist in efforts for complete, county-wide broadband, particularly in growth & investment areas.	Local zoning administrators and planners	Professional technical assistance

# Resolutions of Adoption

## GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

### RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION OF THE MASTER PLAN FOR GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

#### BY THE GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008, as amended, authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the future development of the County; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a new Master Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2013, the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners approved distribution of the new Master Plan for Grand Traverse County to municipalities for their review and comment;

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on October 15, 2013 to consider public comment on the new Master Plan and to further review and comment on the proposed new Master Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Grand Traverse County Planning Commission hereby approves the Master Plan for Grand Traverse County and recommends approval of same to the Board of Commissioners.

Moved: Dave Bieganowski

Seconded: Jeff Cockfield

Yeas: Peter Albers, Dave Bieganowski, Phil Case, Jeff Cockfield, Kelly Hall, Sara Kopriva, Dan Morley, Cori Nielson, Charlie Renny, Sarna Salzman

Nays: none

Absent: none

Attested to this 15th day of October, 2013



Sarna Salzman, Planning Commission Chair



Peter Albers, Planning Commission Secretary

# Resolutions of Adoption

## RESOLUTION

161-2013

### **To Adopt the Master Plan for Grand Traverse County**

WHEREAS, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended, authorizes the Planning Commission to prepare a Master Plan for the use, development and preservation of all lands in the County, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission prepared a new Master Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on October 15, 2013 to consider public comment on the new Master Plan, and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission approved the new Master Plan on October 15, 2013 and made a recommendation for approval of the new Master Plan to the Board of Commissioners; and,

WHEREAS the Board of Commissioners finds that the new Master Plan is desirable and proper and furthers the use, development and preservation goals and strategies of the County;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners has asserted by resolution its right to approve or reject the new Master Plan in accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners hereby approves and adopts the 2013 Master Plan for Grand Traverse County.
- 2) The Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners approves distribution of the adopted Plan.

The Plan shall be effective as of the date of adoption of this resolution

APPROVED: November 27, 2013

I HEREBY CERTIFY THIS COPY TO BE A  
TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE RECORD ON  
FILE WITH THE OFFICE OF COUNTY CLERK  
BONNIE SCHEELE  
GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY CLERK  
BY: [Signature]  
CLERK/DEPUTY COUNTY CLERK  
DATE: 12/13/2013